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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0537
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0038
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0317
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7593
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 1250
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SUBJECT: TURKEY: POL-MIL ROUND-UP, October 2006

(Note: This is one of a regular series of unclassified reports on significant Turkish defense and national security issues in the press and other open sources. End note.)

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National Security Council Convenes

¶1. Turkey's National Security Council (NSC) held its bi-monthly meeting on October 31. Internal and external developments affecting Turkey's national security topped the agenda of the meeting. Negotiations on Iran's nuclear program after the UN Security Council resolution of July 31 were discussed in detail, while the importance of solving the issue through diplomatic channels was underlined. Developments in the south Caucasus and the PKK situation following the terrorist organization's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire beginning October 1, 2006, were among other issues discussed in the meeting.

Turkey's Security Relations with Other Countries

¶2. Lebanon: Turkish Naval Forces Command deployed a frigate to Lebanon on October 6 to serve at the Naval Forces Command of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. 19 officers and 203 non-commissioned officers and privates were assigned to staff the frigate. The Foreign Ministry announced on the same day that Turkey was planning to deploy 600-700 troops to Lebanon. A 7-member mine detection team of the Turkish Armed Forces was deployed to Lebanon on October 17. Two ships carrying 95 military construction engineers and equipment were deployed to Lebanon on October 19. The engineering squadron consisted of 261 personnel, including 237 soldiers and 24 civilians.

¶3. Afghanistan: Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul released an official statement noting that Turkish troops will not assume combat

duties against the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida or resume responsibilities in the south or other parts of Afghanistan, but only in the Kabul area. Turkey, which initiated a joint command of ISAF Central Command covering the Kabul region with Italy and France on August 6, will hold the rotating leadership from April-December 2007, during which time Turkey will increase its troop strength from 620 to 900.

¶4. Armenia: The Turkish General Staff (TGS) announced on October 11 that Armenians fired at Turkish soldiers on the Turkey-Armenia border. No casualties or property damage were reported.

¶5. Greece: TGS announced on October 13 that Turkish F-16 fighter jets and a CASA plane were harassed four times by Greek fighter jets in international airspace over the Aegean Sea on October 12. The Turkish F-16 fighter jets were on a training mission while the CASA plane was on its way to Antalya from Incirlik/Adana, according to the TGS. TGS reported three other interception incidents against Turkish F-16 jets over the Aegean Sea on October 16, according to ANA.

¶6. China: Air Force Commander of the People's Republic of China General Qiao Qingchen met Turkish Air Forces Commander General Faruk Comert in Ankara on October 18. Stating that both countries aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation in several areas, Gen Comert noted that the two countries were conducting joint activities regarding technological developments and exchange of information. Gen Comert further noted that China was interested in space projects and space tenders in Turkey, according to the semi-official Anatolian News Agency (ANA).

Defense Industry Activity

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¶7. The three-member Executive Defense Committee (Prime Minister, Defense Minister, Chief of the General Staff), Turkey's top decision-making body on defense industrial procurement, was to convene on October 17, but was postponed when Prime Minister Erdogan was hospitalized after collapsing in Parliament. According to press reports, the Committee was expected to decide whether to accept a bid for the production of up to 91 ATAK helicopters from South Africa's Denel or Italy's Mangusta (the two finalists in a tender in which no US company participated), or whether to cancel the tender in favor of an FMS purchase from Boeing or Bell. Commenting on the ATAK tender after postponement of the meeting, Defense Minister Gonul said Turkey might consider procuring up to 150 helicopters. The Executive Defense Committee meeting has been re-scheduled for December 12.

¶8. Kalekalip Company, which manufactures parts for Boeing and for the Joint Strike Fighter (F-35), is to produce Turkey's first unmanned aerial vehicle, known as a 'spy plane,' under contract with the Defense Industry Undersecretariat (SSM), according to the left-leaning daily Cumhuriyet.

¶9. During his official visit to the US, Defense Minister Gonul said Turkey plans to purchase 30 F-16 Block-50 aircraft from the United States. He further noted that the government wants Turkish defense industry involvement in the manufacture of those jets.

¶10. Turkey's Aselsan Electronic Industry Co. signed a contract worth 2.8 million USD with the Armed Forces of Uruguay on October 18 to supply wireless communication equipment and to establish internal communication systems for Uruguay's military. (ANA)

¶11. The Black Sea and Caspian Business Group inaugurated a new bi-monthly, English-language defense magazine called 'Defence Turkey.' The magazine contains information about the defense industry, private and government-owned defense companies, and the Turkish Armed Forces.

WILSON